

# *The Character Quarterly*

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*No one ever finds life worth  
living- he has to make it  
worth living.*

*~Unknown*



## Make a Difference Day 2002

*By Midn 3/C Patrick Daly*

On October 26, 2002 more than four million volunteers across America and throughout the world went out into their communities and lent a helping hand as part of Make A Difference Day. The Brigade of Midshipmen has participated in this annual event yearly since the program was founded by the Points of Light Foundation in 1992. Throughout the year, many midshipmen are involved in various community service initiatives, but Make A Difference Day serves as a culmination of many projects. This year the Midshipman

Action Group (MAG), the Brigade's community service organization, sponsored ten student-led service projects in which over 250 midshipman participated.

Many hours of planning went into seeing that the projects on Make A Difference Day went well. Behind MAG advisor Patricia Barrows, Director of Community Relations at the Naval Academy, and Officer Representative, LT Karen Porter of the Character Development Division, MAG officers and project leaders came together weekly to work out issues such as recruiting other volunteers and transportation to events. As MAG's overall coordinator for Make A Difference Day, 1/C Nicholas Kesler worked hard in the preceding weeks to ensure that all of the Brigade's projects on the 26<sup>th</sup> would be successful.

The YMCA-sponsored Camp Letts in Edgewater, Maryland was the destination for almost sixty midshipmen volunteers. Led by 1/C Nicholas Yonnone, midshipmen helped the Camp's staff with maintenance projects and landscaping tasks. Their help enabled the staff at Camp Letts to go a long way towards preparing the site for next

year's activities. The project's impact on the grateful YMCA staff left 1/C Yonnone feeling proud of the initiative and enthusiasm of his fellow midshipmen. "With service work you may not see immediate results but you know that what you are doing will have an impact over time... a few people, even one, can make a difference."

Midshipman 3/C Jason Schulze is a project leader for the ongoing Project BIG—Books for International Goodwill in which midshipmen help the Parole Rotary Club several times per month at their warehouse. On this Saturday morning, they sorted donated books and textbooks that will be sent to disadvantaged schools and students around the world. "I enjoy being able to get out and see the difference that we're able to make and know that it really is helping someone", explained 3/C Schulze as he took part in Make A Difference Day with Rotary Club members. "I think it is important for the Brigade to be active in a community that supports us so well."

Midshipmen feel they have a special connection to the local Germantown Elementary School in Annapolis. Last year, they led an effort to beautify the school's yard and playground. Beginning earlier this year, as part of the Mids for Kids program, midshipmen volunteer at Germantown to work with the students and their teachers in the classroom. On Make A Difference Day, midshipmen from three companies, 7, 25, and 28 led an effort to once again improve the school's landscaping and playground as well as the adjoining Poplar Path walking trail.

On this day, midshipmen would not only set out to help their immediate Annapolis community, but also around the state of Maryland. Over fifty midshipmen par-



ticipated in a Orchard Gleaning project in northern Maryland in conjunction with the Washington Gleaning Network. They picked apples donated by Colora Orchard

*With service work you may not see immediate results but you know that what you are doing will have an impact over time... a few people, even one, can make a difference.*

that would be delivered to food banks in the Washington D.C. area. For Midshipman 1/C Theresa Morris who organized the project, "The best part about doing community service is working together." Indeed, everyone participating in the gleaning project realized the true potential of teamwork in helping others.

Wearing gray Navy sweat-shirts with camouflage pants and black boots and with hammers in hand, midshipman took part in building a home in Annapolis for a local family as part of Habitat for Humanity. For a project in which midshipman have participated for several months now, Make A Difference Day, even by its name, highlighted the importance

of their volunteering. Through their help, a family will soon own a home of their own, perhaps for the first time.

Like most Saturday mornings, Project White Hat was making a difference in lives of some very special people. The Naval Academy's volunteer program at the children's center at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Project White Hat gives midshipmen the opportunity to interact with the children who are patients at the hospital. Some of these children suffer from life-threatening illnesses. Midshipmen help the hospital's child-life specialists to make the children's stay the best it

guides.

Make A Difference Day also saw the Midshipman Big Brothers and Big Sisters join their "Littles" for an activity on the Yard. More than fifty midshipmen serve as mentors to local children as part of the Central Maryland Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization. Midshipman 2/C Jenna Seidel coordinates the Brigade-side of the program in which the midshipmen organize a group-wide activity with their "Littles" at least once a month. 2/C Seidel perhaps expressed best what everyone involved in Make A Difference Day took away from it that the best part was "seeing all of the people who came out to participate. It was definitely an amazing effort that was put forth throughout the

Brigade to help the community in numerous ways."

Leading up to Make A Difference Day, there was a real sense in the Brigade to want to help out a generous community that has always been there for them. For some, it was a routine Saturday of volunteering, while for others it may have been the spark of a life-long dedication to com-

munity service. Either way, Make A Difference Day afforded the Brigade of Midshipman a welcome opportunity to help others.



can be. And In Washington D.C., at the charity 5k race supporting Bone Marrow Research, midshipmen from 1<sup>st</sup> company led by 3/C Neil D'Arco served as timers and



## Gender Integration

*By Midn 1/C Christopher Napierkowski*

From the standpoint of the Naval Academy, as well as West Point, Air Force, Merchant Marine, and Coast Guard, gender integration is not a new problem. Although each Academy has made great strides in creating an environment of civility and respect, there are still many problems that arise. The Citadel and VMI also suffer from integration concerns, but their problems do not come after years of practice. These two schools find themselves struggling with many of the same problems the academies did over 25 years ago. The recent integration of the Citadel and VMI brought about national attention, and their inexperience in the matter has created a plethora of issues that require attention. The Corbin Conference was established to address the issues of gender integration.

At the 2002 Corbin Conference, midshipmen and cadets from all the service academies had an opportunity to sit down together and discuss problems that each school encountered. Issues such as patriotism, rumors versus fact, volunteerism, and gender integration were discussed in workshops, allowing the students to see the perspectives of their fellow men and women at the other academies. The goal was to find solutions for the problems of each academy through the ideas of all the men and women present for the conference. Comparing ideas between academies offers a greater perspective on what possibilities are available, and

opens new perspectives on all the issues.

Although some academies integrated almost three decades ago, and others only recently began to tackle the issue, many of our problems are similar in nature. Problems arose from the perceptions of a few negative people becoming the uninformed views of all. We cannot blindly judge a person for their sex, race, religion, etc. and when a person does this, it shows their own ignorance.

Another concern that came up in the gender workshops was how the administrations of each Academy seemed to force the idea of integration. The Citadel and VMI frequently made reference to this issue, but the other academies

*Though critics will argue otherwise, a military sensitive to women need not imply an emasculated force. There is no connection between the male soldier's freedom to harass and his martial potency.*

*~Gerald J. DeGroot*

suffer from this as well. People cannot try to push gender equality too far in the hopes of making up for years of uninformed thought. The change must come naturally and be supported, but not forced.

Many strides have been made to promote equality at the service academies. Education has been a strong catalyst for acceptance and respect across both sexes. By educating a person who may have preconceived notions from past experiences, you give them an opportunity to form more intelligent opinions and treat others with dignity. Education opens the door for equal treatment and an opportunity for all

to earn respect. It took the Academies years to become accustomed to a multi-gendered society, and problems still occasionally arise today. But with the opportunities increasing for women to play a greater role in the military in general, integration has become a smoother process at the academies.

Coming out of the Corbin Conference, many ideas were suggested by each academy that could be implemented within their schools. First, as mentioned previously, education goes a long way in effecting equality. Women are naturally different than men, but are just as competent and successful. When all midshipmen and cadets realize this idea, the environment will greatly change for the better. Second, the concept of gender integration cannot be pushed onto people forcefully. It will only make them rebel against the idea since change comes gradually through time. Finally, and most important, take a stand personally. If you see or hear people mistreating another, or talking negatively about another, stand up and defend that person. We all must learn to work with each other on an individual basis, and we must count on each other to get the mission accomplished, both at the academies and out in the service. We must show all people respect; by personally going the extra mile to create an environment for equality to grow and prosper we can personally effect change. Gender integration is a sticky topic, and each academy has suffered its own stumblings along the way. In fact, we still encounter them today. But we have made movement forward, and the road to respecting all people looks brighter every day.

## Communication: Rumors vs. Fact

By Midn 2/C Jennifer Hammer

In this day and age, it is very difficult to determine whether a passing remark is a fact, or whether it is a sensationalized rumor. Since the academies are such tight-knit groups within the military, rumors can be started quite easily. How do rumors and gossip affect the way males and females interact in the college setting, particularly at service academies? Are rumors and gossip beneficial or detrimental in such a setting? During the 2002 Corbin Conference, one of the workshops focused on the problems associated with the spread of rumors, and ways that each academy can put a stop to this unprofessional means of communication.

Every academy and military institution attending agreed that the spread of rumors is an impediment to proper communications at their school. Each institution also agreed that the major problem with rumors

attempting to deal with them in different ways.

For Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy, first sergeant feedback is a positive step to open lines of communication. This process allows underclassmen to forward complaints, problems, and opinions up the first sergeant chain of command. However, this is not always consistent and frequently does not result in the dispelling of rumors before they become widespread.

Another possible way to open lines of communication is "sensing sessions." These sessions would be open meetings allowing cadets or midshipmen to question their academy's leadership on current policies in order to dispel any rumors that may be floating around.

While these are possible solutions to rumors and communications problems, they may not work at every academy. Each academy differs due to its size and structure. For example, smaller academies may have better communication, but also a larger quantity of rumors being spread because "everyone knows ev-

spread and linger for longer. Non-federal military schools differ because students pay to attend. Thus, they have more ownership of the school and are more prone to have their concerns acted upon to solve even the slightest communications problems. Finally, schools in which females have been integrated more recently may have more communications and rumors problems due to the greater existence of underlying discriminatory thoughts.

It is evident that each school has its own unique communications problems, all of which are solvable with some effort. The officer facilitator for the communications workshop, Chaplain Newman, remarked that, "Professionalism need not rely on sensationalism." He pointed out that rumors can be dispelled in the service academy environment, but it takes the effort of each midshipmen and cadet to be strong and put a stop to any rumors that reach them, instead of passing them along.

The workshop participants suggested professionalism training in order to encourage midshipmen and cadets to put a stop to rumors when they start, and to fight the urge to spread the sensationalism. Sensationalizing academy life and policy is not professional, and not proper conduct for a future officer. Professionalism training would provide midshipmen and cadets the tools to be strong and put a stop to rumors that are heard, even under the peer pressure that dominates the Academies.

Rumors will always be spread, and communications blunders will always occur. However, it is our duty as midshipmen and cadets to make unprofessional communication as small a part of our daily lives as possible.

*"Leaders who make it a practice to draw out the thoughts and ideas of their subordinates and who are receptive even to bad news will be properly informed. Communicate downward to subordinates with at least the same care and attention as you communicate upward to superiors."*

*~L.B. Belker*

and lapses in communication spurs from the fact that cadets and midshipmen are not told why a new policy is passed down. Although there are some similarities, each institution has varying degrees of communications problems, and is

everyone." Communication problems may also result from the sea year that exists at one of the academies, in which students are absent for all or part of their sophomore and junior years. With the resulting lack of face-to-face communication, rumors can

## Volunteerism

*by Midn 1/C Anne Gibbon*

**M**edal of Honor recipients that once walked the halls of the nation's military academies as students are memorialized in bronze plaques next to the doors of their old rooms. But those are not the only veterans that have a presence within these institutions. Few people expect to find honored war veterans holding the broom that cleans their living quarters. Most midshipmen and cadets simply walk past the workers as we rush to class or a brief. We stop to show deference to the people for whom respect is demanded by the amount of gold on their sleeve, but many times overlook great patriots they pass several times a day. At a workshop focused on volunteerism at the recent Corbin Conference, the officer candidates discussed not only commu-

nity service but also cultivating the mindset of servitude toward others.

How far does the motto service before self extend? Is it an officer's duty to volunteer in his or her community or just an extension of a service driven nature? Should community service be a mandated unit responsibility, or is there already too much work to be done while preparing for upcoming missions? Not only did the students pose questions about the relativity of this subject in the military, but we also looked within the academies at our own student bodies. We asked ourselves whether or not midshipmen or cadets were arrogant and unnaturally accustomed to an isolated military environment. Possible solutions that we discussed included mandatory volunteering, or exchanging types of punishment, such as marching tours, for hours of community service.

One of the specific ideas that evolved out of the discussions was to focus some introductory

training on the topic of "Service before Self". In fact, the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Mr. England, spoke of that subject when he addressed the Brigade on 20 November, 2002. He mentioned that of the term "military service", service is the key word. The young people who fight for America are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the values for which our country stands. By emphasizing to plebes early in their training the lesson that not only have they pledged to give their lives if necessary, but that they will have the privilege of leading men and women who have also taken that oath. Plebes would be better equipped to deal with the hardships of plebe summer and the daily grind of the Academy if more emphasis was to the development of the mindset of the service upon which they entered on Induction Day. In particular, the Naval Academy's Character Development Division should continue incorporate some of these concepts into their current curriculum for plebe summer training.

One of the biggest obstacles to community service at each military academy is time. At the conference, the midshipmen and cadets all mentioned how easy it can become to get lost in the daily details of things to do. All too often we lose sight of the bigger picture and the reasons for which we are here. Although most midshipmen and cadets desire to contribute to the communities in which we live, many felt that we need more direction as to the most time-efficient opportunities we could become involved in. An idea that sprang from the group was to implement community service representatives in each company to better disseminate occasions for community service. (Continued on page 8)





## Patriotism vs Arrogance: Maintaining the Perfect Balance in the U.S.

*By Midn 1/C Mitch Eliason*

**T**he human spirit is finicky and ever changing. The sentiments of Americans prove this to us. During the Vietnam Era, those serving in the United States military were considered heartless murderers. The general populace opposed the bloodshed, and could not understand why Americans would commit such rotten deeds in war. As a result, the soldiers did not enjoy a warm welcome back to the States, but rather were spit on by the very people whose rights and liberties they fought and bled to protect. A few decades later, the United States of America finds itself amidst a similar fog of war. However, now the citizens of this nation cannot seem to offer their troops enough support. The same protesters of the Vietnam War are patting our soldiers on the back saying, "Go kill them all!" Experts claim that this deviation from the sentiments of the 1960s and 70s results from the proximity of the tragedy. If you did not know someone killed on September 11, 2001

you at least know someone that knows someone that perished. Whatever the reason may be, the citizens of the United States have shown strong support to our military both abroad and at home.

While this support bleeds positive connotations and a sense of deep patriotism, has it also served to swell the egos of those in the military? During the 2002 Margaret Corbin Conference, one of its work-

shops attempted to answer this question. The workshop titled "Patriotism versus Arrogance" focused on the effect the support of the public has had on the operation of the military. This starting point gave way to other discussions on topics in which patriotism may have crossed the fine line into a negatively connotated arrogance.



Despite all attempts to stand for that which is right, the United States of America tends to find itself in less-than-favorable positions amongst other nations as a result of its foreign policy. Members of the conference agreed that often times the land of the free serves as the target of piercing shots of anti-American rage. To analyze why, the workshop focused on the American role in various past and current events

in Europe and Asia. One cadet believed that it is "the right and duty of the United States to protect other nations because we are the Hegemon of the world." Other cadets and midshipmen offered that this very attitude is the roots of the negative image we have painted abroad. Nations resent our attempt to be "big brother at the onset of every conflict." Furthermore, Americans seem too ready to interfere with nations despite lacking any knowledge of their respective cultures. A common conclusion was that the problem with the way our foreign policy is perceived roots itself in the fact that Americans are ignorant of other cultures and tend to tread blindly as a result. We generate and enforce policies that may be contrary to what other nations and cultures believe. While our leaders try to set policy that is the best for all, this ignorance results in what is perceived as American arrogance.

Boasting American flags and outwardly supporting the troops has become a popular endeavor for everyone in the land of the free. Our soldiers are near and dear to the hearts of Americans. Since September 11, 2001 patriotism has reached unforeseen levels and almost everyone has hitched himself or herself to the bandwagon. This has swelled a sense of pride and patriotism in the hearts of all those in the military. The Commandant of the United States Naval Academy, Colonel John Allen, addressed the participants of the Corbin Conference and spoke on the idea that those in a military (Continued on page 8)

### Patriotism vs. Arrogance (Continued from page 7)

unit are as a family. He continued to say that members of this family look out for each other and protect one another. Throughout the workshops the cadets and midshipmen agreed that a special link bonds the members of a unit so tightly that it allows one to lay down his or her life for the brother standing next to him. As a result of this cohesion, the general populace may not understand or even be invited to share in this cohesion. This does separate the military from the community to a degree, but it does not create a sense of arrogance. Just as the citizens of this nation serve in their own ways, so does the military. Not one group is more important, or deserves a greater degree of respect.

Recently the citizens of the United States of America have been reawakened to the beauty of this nation. It is popular to be proud of the red, white and blue. Often, Americans are criticized for allowing this pride to run too deeply. Often, Americans are perceived as ignorant. Some nearly lend a deaf

ear to these critics, but the 2002 Corbin Conference sought to welcome the challenge this controversy brings. Cadets and Midshipmen from across the country represented their respective institutions and each brought a unique twist to the discussion. While opinions did vary on whether Americans are solely patriotic or properly portrayed as arrogant, every participant agreed wearing the uniform everyday serves as symbol of the pride he or she feels for the nation.

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### Volunteerism (Continued from page 6)

These midshipmen could coordinate efforts between different companies and ECA's to better use their resources. By making a greater effort to afford midshipmen the opportunity to get outside the walls of the Yard and practice the motto "service before self" we are able to practically apply the lessons of sacrifice we pledged upon Induction Day.

Midshipmen come to the

Naval Academy for varying reasons, but a common trait among each of us is the proclivity towards service. However, the grind of daily life and check lists that never end often cause tunnel vision. By implementing a few strategies to not only emphasize the traits of service and sacrifice to be reflected in a midshipmen's daily life but also practical ways to encourage community service, the midshipmen will be infinitely more prepared to set the example as officers of service before self.

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